

Message Text

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SUBJECT: THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS REGROUP FOR THE REGIONAL
ELECTIONS

1. SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PSDI) CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING,
FEBRUARY 13-15 UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED A PLATFORM FOR THE FORTH-
COMING REGIONAL ELECTIONS; THE GENERAL SUCCESS OF THE MEETING
HELPED RESTORE THE PARTY'S IMAGE AFTER THE DIVISIONS AND
SETBACKS OF THE LAST GOVERNMENT CRISIS.

2. THE PLATFORM IS PRIMARILY AN EMPHATIC RESTATEMENT OF THE
TRADITIONAL POLITICAL POSTURE OF THE PARTY IN THE LIGHT OF
PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES. MAIN POINTS ARE A RETURN TO A FOUR-
PARTY CENTER-LEFT GOVERNMENT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, IN ITS
ORIGINAL SPIRIT (THAT IS, AS A BARRIER TO THE PCI); FIRM
OPPOSITION TO THE COMMUNIST PROPOSAL OF A "HISTORIC COM-
PROMISE" WITH THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS WHICH WOULD RENDER
THE OTHER PARTIES IRRELEVANT AND "BRING LIBERTY IN ITALY TO
THE POINT OF NO RETURN" AND OPPOSITION TO THE SOCIALIST
DEMAND FOR A PREFERENTIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE DC WHICH WOULD
SIMPLY OPEN THE DOOR TO THE HISTORIC COMPROMISE.

3. THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING ALSO PUT HEAVY EMPHASIS ON THE
ISSUE OF LAW AND ORDER. IN FACT, ON THIS ISSUE IN
PARLIAMENT THE PARTY IS OUT IN FRONT OF THE DC. IN INTER-
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NATIONAL AFFAIRS, THE PARTY'S TRADITIONAL FIRM COMMITMENT TO

THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE IS REAFFIRMED.

4. THE STAGING AND MOST OF THE MAJOR SPEECHES AT THE MEETING WERE INTENDED TO RESTORE THE IMAGE OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AS A PARTY OF THE LEFT, AN IMAGE TARNISHED BY CRITICISMS OF CONSERVATISM STEMMING FROM THE PSDI'S ROLE IN THE LAST CRISIS AND ITS WILLINGNESS TO PROVOKE EARLY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. THE NECESSARY IMAGE AND UNITY-RESTORING PROCESS THEREFORE PRECLUDED EVEN A MENTION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE TO THE ORIGINAL FOUR-PARTY CENTER-LEFT FOR THE POST-MORO PERIOD, OR ANY CONSIDERATION AT ALL OF THE LIBERAL (PLI) PARTY'S RECENT CALL FOR THE FORMATION OF A (PLI-PSDI-PRI) LAY FRONT FOR THE REGIONAL ELECTIONS, EVEN THOUGH THE PROPOSAL HAS BEEN ADVANCED IN THE PAST BY SOME SOCIAL DEMOCRATS.

5. UNANIMITY ON A PLATFORM DID NOT ENTIRELY CONCEAL, HOWEVER, THE PERSISTENCE OF DIFFERENCES WITHIN THE PARTY, WHICH WERE MANIFESTED PRIMARILY BY THE REFUSAL OF BOTH THE PARTY'S LEFT AND RIGHT WINGS TO ENDORSE SECRETARY ORLANDI'S DEFENSE OF THE PARTY'S ACTIONS DURING THE LAST GOVERNMENT CRISIS. WHILE THE PRETI-LED RIGHT WING'S OBJECTIONS PROBABLY REFLECT ONLY MINOR RESERVATIONS OVER TACTICS, THOSE OF THE TINY, SPLINTERED, BUT INFLUENTIAL, LEFT WING SYMBOLIZE THE ENDURING IDENTITY CRISIS OF A PARTY WITH A CENTRIST POLITICAL POSTURE, BUT LEFTIST SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY AND ORIGINS. SCATTERED LOCAL (BUT UNQUANTIFIED) DEFECTIONS TO THE SOCIALISTS, IN REACTION TO THE REPUTATION IT ACQUIRED DURING THE GOVERNMENT CRISIS, HAVE ALSO RECENTLY LACERATED THE PARTY. THEY NO DOUBT HELP EXPLAIN THE THOROUGHGOING SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC ORTHODOXY OF THE PRESENT PLATFORM.

6. DESPITE THESE PROBLEMS, THE MEETING WAS A SUCCESS FOR THE PARTY LEADERSHIP, AND A PERSONAL ONE FOR SECRETARY ORLANDI WHO HAS EMERGED AS THE PARTY'S DOMINANT FIGURE. (PARTY PRESIDENT TANASSI LARGELY LIMITED HIS ROLE TO PRESIDING, EXCEPT FOR ONE SHORT CONCILIATORY DEFENSE OF THE PSDI'S ROLE IN THE LAST CRISIS.) MOREOVER, THE CONCURRENT COLLAPSE OF THE VENICE "MINI-COMPROMESSO" (ROME 2588), TRIGGERED BY THE PSDI, LENT CREDIBILITY TO THE PSDI'S REAFFIRMATION OF ITS ANTI-COMMUNIST CONFIDENTIAL

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STANCE AND INITIATIVES, AND THE PARTY RETAINS RELEVANCE AS A HAVEN FOR VOTERS IN THE CENTER-LEFT WHO DEMAND UNCOMPROMISING OPPOSITION TO THE COMMUNISTS.

7. IN A LENGTHY PRIVATE MEETING WITH THE AMBASSADOR, PARTY PRESIDENT RANASSI EXPRESSED HIS PERSONAL SATISFACTION WITH THE SUCCESS OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING. HOWEVER, HE EXPECTS ONLY MODERATE SUCCESS FOR HIS PARTY IN THE REGIONAL

ELECTIONS. HE IS PRIMARILY CONCERNED OVER THE PROSPECT OF SUBSTANTIAL LOSSES BY THE DC TO THE SOCIALISTS. THIS RESULT, HE FEELS, WOULD LIKELY MAKE THE LATTER EVEN MORE DIFFICULT TO LIVE WITH. HE NOW (REGRETFULLY) FORESEES NO ALTERNATIVE TO A CONTINUATION OF THE CENTER-LEFT FORMULA, SINCE WITHOUT THE SOCIALISTS, THE OTHER DEMOCRATIC FORCES ARE TOO WEAK. TANASSI PRAISED FANFANI'S PERFORMANCE AT THE RECENT DC NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING, SUPPORTS HIS LAW AND ORDER PROPOSALS, AND EXPECTS HIM TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN FORESTALLING ANY FURTHER "MIN-HISTORIC COMPROMISES" AT THE LOCAL LEVEL. VOLPE

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